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ABSTRACT

A program has been developed at Gallaudet College (District of Columbia) which provides a B.A. degree and regular teacher certification for hearing impaired or deaf students. The focus is exclusively on "regular" education, and its expressed intent is to prepare hearing impaired preservice teachers for full certification in regular education by requiring them to student teach hearing children. The program is similar to other preservice training programs, including course work in educational foundations and specific curriculum areas methods, and a supervised student teaching practicum with only hearing children. An outline of the components of the practicum emphasizes the importance of holding continual and regular conferences between the student, cooperating teacher, parents, and school administration to assure feedback on the specific problems and successes in the communication process between student teacher and the children. A detailed description is presented of types of communication difficulties and how they can be overcome; and generalized issues for all handicapping conditions are discussed. (JD)

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MAKING THE TEACHING PROFESSION ACCESSIBLE TO THE HANDICAPPED

Paper presented to the

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July 13, 1983

by

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During the past hundred years many encouraging gains have been made in making post-secondary education and professional careers accessible to members of society previously disenfranchised because of gender, socio-economic, or ethnic background.

In the United States the rapid expansion of post-secondary accessibility began with the establishment of free universal compulsory secondary education and the establishment of the land grant universities. More recently, it has been facilitated by provision of various student financial assistance such as the G. I. Bill and subsequent state and federal financial aid programs, by the community college movement, and by significant legislation ensuring equal opportunity for women, ethnic minorities, and the handicapped.

Since World War II, many countries throughout the world have removed historic socio-economic or class barriers to pre- and post-secondary education. However, in most of the world, the handicapped are still denied access to higher education and to the professions. The barriers usually include (1) the failure of governmental policy makers, educators, and citizens to recognize the potential capabilities and contributions of the handicapped, (2) the limited or non-existent opportunity for appropriate pre-university secondary education, (3) lack of appropriate support services at the university level, (4) regulations governing professional licensure that bar the handicapped from entering the profession, and (5) bias against the handicapped by potential employers. Until this situation is changed, a nation's democratization of education will not be complete, and its human resources will not be fully utilized.

The purpose of this presentation is to encourage you, as leaders in teacher education from some fifty countries around the world, to address the challenge of opening the teaching profession to the handicapped, to give them opportunity to enjoy personal fulfillment through professional service, and to better utilize these valuable human resources for the good of the society.

The American Commitment to the Handicapped

In the early days of this country, American commitment to educating the handicapped was expressed through religious and philanthropic special schools. As early as 1857, the federal government established the Columbia Institution for the Deaf and Blind (later to become Gallaudet College). Later, publicly supported special schools for the handicapped emerged in each state. In recent years federal legislation implemented a national commitment to searching out and educating every handicapped child (K-12) in the most appropriate environment. This began a massive integration into regular public schools. Other federal laws required the removal of physical barriers at colleges and universities, and the provision of appropriate support services (readers for the blind, interpreters for the deaf, etc.) for post-secondary students. Popular as well as governmental support for special education has been very strong in recent years and the achievements of handicapped persons have been widely publicized in the media.

Post-secondary Educational Opportunities for the Hearing Impaired in the U.S.

Gallaudet College, with its establishment by the U. S. Congress in 1864, became the world's first college for the deaf, and is still the only

accredited liberal arts college for the deaf in the world. For many years Gallaudet was the primary producer of deaf college graduates while a small number of hearing impaired students completed degrees (without support services) in regular universities.

During the past twenty years post-secondary opportunities for the deaf have expanded dramatically. Beginning with Riverside City College in 1961, many community colleges have developed special programs and services for deaf students preparing for a variety of vocations. California State University at Northridge began a Leadership Training Program for Deaf Educators in 1964. The National Technical Institute for the Deaf was chartered by Congress in 1965 to prepare deaf students for technical professions. By 1980, 4,000 hearing impaired students were enrolled in 52 major college and university programs for the deaf (Davila, 1982) with many others enrolled in regular programs in a variety of regular colleges and universities. More than half of these were enrolled at Gallaudet College or The National Technical Institute for the Deaf.

Although deaf alumni of Gallaudet and other institutions have achieved success and national recognition in professions such as education of the deaf, law, medicine, theater, art, and business, there is still much progress to be made. Only 11% of deaf graduates are in professional, technical, or managerial positions compared with 25% of the hearing (Harkins, 1978).

Up until very recently regular teacher preparation was not available to the deaf and deaf teachers served exclusively in special schools. Gallaudet began preparing hearing teachers for the deaf in 1891. Although our masters degree program for the preparation of teachers of the hearing impaired has

been enrolling and graduating deaf teachers since the 1950's, the specialized nature of their training did not qualify them for regular state teacher certification and employment by regular public school systems. With the widespread mainstreaming of deaf children into regular public schools, the long existing need for the removal of this barrier to the regular teaching profession became imperative. In 1978-79, our education faculty designed a B.A. program to meet state and national professional accreditation standards, and the first class, eligible for regular teacher certification was graduated in 1982.

The Gallaudet Undergraduate Teacher Education Program

As this Assembly continues now to examine specific ways in which professional opportunities for handicapped persons may become realities, it is useful to analyze one particular experience that has succeeded in preparing hearing-impaired adults for professional work in the "mainstream" of the teaching profession.

The Program

Well over one-half of the states require that would-be teachers in fields of "special education" (including deaf education) must have not only specialized training but also training (and, in a number of cases, full certification) in "regular education," i.e., with hearing children, as a prerequi te. This development constitutes a special challenge to the hearing-impaired adult who wishes to become a teacher of hearing-impaired children.

In the spring of 1980, Gallaudet College approved a new Undergraduate Education Program within the liberal arts framework for undergraduates. The focus is exclusively on "regular" education, and follows closely the requirements needed for teacher certification in District of Columbia schools and some 27 other states which are party to the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education Certification (NASDTEC) reciprocity agreement. This program for hearing impaired pre-service teachers may be unique in its express intent to prepare such a group for full certification in regular education by requiring all students to do student teaching with hearing children.

The level of hearing impairment among students in the program ranges from several students with moderate hearing loss who, with amplification, can function both receptively and expressively through either voice or sign language, to several students with profound hearing loss who function receptively and expressively only through sign language and some lipreading. It is the latter group which presents the greatest challenge and who "raise the eyebrows" of many hearing people when they announce that they are going to work in a "hearing" classroom environment.

What could a pre-service program look like for such a group? The answer is, "highly similar to any other pre-service training program in regular education in the areas of early childhood, elementary, and secondary education." That answer means course work in educational foundations and specific curriculum area methods, and a supervised student teaching practicum with only hearing children.

The Practicum: A Least-Restrictive Environment

Every effort is made to make this practicum experience the "least restrictive environment" for both student teacher and children. The practicum experience has the following components:

1. As with other teacher preparation programs, the student teaching experience is preceded by two other levels of gradual involvement in the classroom:
   a. Several systematic observation experiences, with subsequent analysis, in hearing classrooms.
   b. Several consecutive weeks of participation through volunteer teacher-assisting in a hearing classroom.
2. Each student is then held responsible for developing a specific personal action plan for the ways in which she or he will introduce herself or himself to, and then function in, a hearing classroom as a hearing-impaired person. The planning is individualized so that the student can tailor the plan to his or her own degree of hearing impairment.
3. Continual and regular conferencing occurs between the student and the Cooperating Teacher to ensure feedback on the specific problems and successes in the communication process between student and children, Cooperating Teacher, parents, and school administration. Such regular conferences have again been a long standing fixture of practicum experiences, but serve a critical function in this special practicum situation.

4. Weekly observations and critiques by a college supervisor, as is done with most teacher training programs.
5. In-service orientation by the College for Cooperating Teachers about deafness and how to work in partnership with a hearing-impaired adult.

The steps in the student plans in item three above are the elements which have turned out to be the most critical to implementing the student teaching experience for this special group of young people.

Attitude Survey

During the first year of this innovative program, a special pre- and post-attitude survey was administered to student teachers, pupils, parents, Cooperating Teachers, and school principals to assess attitudes and opinions about the placement of a hearing-impaired student teacher with hearing children. Surveys were completed before the beginning of the student teaching period and again at the conclusion of the period. (Detailed tabular presentation of results are available upon request). Results of the survey analysis indicated that: (1) successful communication was achieved by student teachers with children in spite of the hearing impairment; (2) hearing-impaired student teachers progressed through stages of development that were similar to those experienced by hearing student teachers in the same classroom environment; (3) classroom control became a prime concern by the end of the student teaching period, with useful adaptations being developed by these special student teachers; (4) attitudes of the hearing persons toward the hearing-impaired students remained consistently high to the end of the student

teaching period; (5) a need was identified for student teachers to communicate directly with parents; (6) parents universally believed that contact with the hearing-impaired student teacher was a positive experience for their children; and (7) student teachers, by the end of the student teaching period, increased their self-understanding as hearing-impaired persons in a hearing world. The significance of these findings rests in their general applicability not only to future hearing-impaired pre-professionals preparing to teach "normal" children, but also to pre-professionals with other handicapping conditions preparing to work with "normal" populations in a variety of professions.

Three Categories of Communication Challenge

It is important to distinguish these results further in terms of three types of communication situations in which these student teachers worked. (1) Several students with a mild or moderate hearing loss chose to do their practicum work without a professional interpreter and use only amplification through hearing aids. (2) Several others with a severe loss required the use of an interpreter to "transliterate" for them in sign language what the children were saying but were able to communicate directly back to the children with their own voices. (3) A third sub-group with a profound loss required the use of a classroom interpreter for both transliteration to them of children's speech, and "reverse" interpreting back to the children in the interpreter's voice of what the student teacher was saying in sign language.

To say that all communication proceeded without problems would be untrue. Examples of continuing communication challenges would include the following:

1. Several days were required for younger children to realize that the classroom interpreter is only the "ears" and "voice" of the student teacher and not another "teacher," and that they should continue to look at the student teacher during all communication.
2. Some additional time is required in the instructional process for the interpreter to translate communications between student teacher and children, and vice versa.
3. Some of the numerous simultaneous child-to-child verbal interactions during small group classroom work is lost to the profoundly deaf student teacher, even with an interpreter, because the interpreter can only translate one verbal interchange at a time and only in the visual modality. The hearing teacher, on the other hand, can be watching one group and aurally monitoring several other interchanges in other groups at the same time.

Nonetheless, in spite of these acknowledged limitations, the clear majority of communications are unquestionably successful in this unique practicum setting.

Generalized Issues for All Handicapping Conditions

We should now analyze the importance of this program in relation to the needs of pre-professional preparation of handicapped persons in general. Several critical issues appear which need careful scrutiny by all those responsible for such pre-service and in-service training programs.

1. High Expectations. As with the handicapped child in the school classroom, administrators and educators of the handicapped

pre-professional individual must rigidly maintain high expectations. The poisonous, self-fulfilling prophecy of lowered expectations has affected the handicapped pre-professional for many years; only by believing in and making our actions demonstrate the same expectations of performance as are made for nonhandicapped individuals can we break away from this past. While our experience indicates that high expectations produce predictable temporary frustrations for the handicapped pre-service teacher, nonetheless, high expectations themselves can also be self-fulfilling prophecies.

2. The Continuum of Handicapping Conditions. Educators must avoid oversimplification of categories for the handicapping condition itself. We find many deceptively convenient categories and labels which are frequently attached to perceived gradations within handicapping conditions (severely hearing-impaired, profoundly hearing-impaired; severely visually impaired, legally blind; mildly learning disabled, severely learning disabled); we must bear in mind that these labels are but arbitrary cutoff points on what is in fact a continuum within any handicapping condition. Such labels may help us to identify possible anticipated services needed to assist that individual (e.g., most "profoundly hearing impaired" teachers working with hearing children will need the services of an interpreter); however, we find frequent exceptions. Applying this continuum concept may be the key to avoiding nonproductive or harmful stereotyping of the handicapped professional, just as it is the key in the same way for educating the handicapped child.

3. Culture Shock. Remember that the handicapped pre-professional who has been educated as a child in a special environment may well experience a type of "culture shock" and a "communication shock" as an adult when beginning to work with nonhandicapped clientele, whether those nonhandicapped clientele are children or adults. In this sense, the pre-professional in training must overcome the same series of learning-from-mistakes that characterizes not only any practicum experience but also, perhaps, a totally new social milieu. For this purpose, it behooves those charged with training the handicapped pre-professional to have some sensitization and orientation themselves to "alien" cultural environments.

4. The Curiosity Factor. Handicapped pre-professionals must expect both overt and covert curiosity on the part of the nonhandicapped clientele with whom they are working. This natural curiosity can interfere with the normal purposes of the practicum experience, because the initial strangeness of the handicapped person to the nonhandicapped clientele may evolve into patronizing sympathy and prevent any appropriate professional-client relationship. On the other hand, the alert pre-professional and his or her training supervisor can capitalize on this anticipated curiosity to the ultimate advantage of all concerned. By expecting the curiosity, taking the time for the pre-professional to deal openly and informatively with it by answering all reasonable questions from the clientele, and then carrying that intense interest into the practicum experience itself, the handicapped pre-professional may have an

advantage of momentum that is not available to the nonhandicapped trainee who is just beginning such work.

5. Dependence vs. Independence. Educators must be aware that the question of providing additional helping services to the handicapped pre-professional raises the age-old issue of dependence-independence. To take the example again of the hearing-impaired pre-service teacher, the issue of providing or not providing an interpreter is a case in point. For the moderately hearing-impaired person, the use of an interpreter with hearing clientele may be an option but not a requirement; some would say that providing an interpreter only increases or maintains the hearing-impaired person's dependence on others for survival in a hearing world. On the other hand, we must stand back and remember that the very provision of such a service is in another sense freeing, or increasing the independence of, that individual--now the person is able to communicate smoothly and can concentrate on the other essential tasks which must be the real subject matter of the practicum experience. The decision about whether or not to provide such ancillary services in the practicum setting must be made on an individual basis. We would suggest that the criterion be the answer to the question, "Will this additional service increase or decrease professional independence?" and that the answer must be arrived at jointly by the pre-professional and his or her supervisor.

Appropriate Placements

Location of appropriate practicum placements for the handicapped pre-professional will necessarily be an important matter. We suggest the following criteria for such sites:

1. Site administrators who are sensitive to handicapping conditions.
2. A practicum community (school, church, hospital, college, etc.) whose ongoing program is well articulated.
3. A practicum community which has a high tolerance for ambiguity.
4. A practicum community which is comfortable with providing full public information when appropriate about the placement of a handicapped pre-professional to work with nonhandicapped clientele.

A full awareness of these basic issues and their possible consequences should assist pre-professionals, practicum supervisors, and clients alike in ensuring a positive and mutually beneficial practicum experience for all constituents in the practicum partnership.

Conclusion

As with any new program which takes some risks, we have not found all of the answers to all of the questions and problems. Without question, the communication challenges for the profoundly deaf students who do not use voice communication remain high; careful and individualized attention to appropriate placement and supervision will continue to be essential. In addition, profoundly deaf individuals find another high challenge in developing strong written communication skills in English because they have not had exposure to the richness and subtleties of spoken English; and in some cases, their native

language is American Sign Language, which has a syntax that is different from English. At Gallaudet, we continue to counsel and tutor students to improve their written communication skills in English, mindful of the virulent public pressure today on all teacher preparation programs to ensure that teachers themselves have the "basic skills" which they will be expected to teach to children.

Why should we continue to try to prepare "disabled" individuals to work in regular classrooms in the first place? They face many barriers. A special Conference on Disabled Educators in 1980 reported that they experience four types of barriers as educators: bias and ignorance, lack of communication from nonhandicapped educators, lack of accommodation, and inappropriate counseling; it was suggested that assertiveness has been essential for overcoming these barriers (McNett & Merchant, 1981). Although today very few professionals would dare to deny that disabled individuals have the right to an access to the profession in the "least restrictive" manner which is appropriate for them, what are the answers to this question of why prepare handicapped individuals for regular education certification?

One answer is that such opportunity is the <u>right</u> of disabled individuals under the law. We would agree, but that is not the whole reason. A second answer is that providing such opportunity is <u>democratic</u> in the sense of recognizing the importance of equality of opportunity in the American way of life. That answer, too, is valid, although condescending. A third answer is that providing a chance for disabled individuals to work with "normal" children gives those children an important experience with human diversity and

can assist them in understanding the disabled in many significant ways. Again, we accept this as only a partial answer, because it implies a type of exploitation of the disabled person. But a fourth possibility may be the real answer: such individuals might just become top quality teachers of children, and that is justification enough indeed.

What lies ahead for teacher preparation institutions working with disabled pre-service teachers? Collaboration between the institutions themselves and school practicum sites will remain essential: as we have seen, special people such as teachers and principals are needed to pave the way for a program that features some special pre-service teachers. In addition, we must continue to exchange information between institutions and nations about problems and successes in this arena--this is one wheel that need not be reinvented around the world.

In the years ahead we should expect and welcome more and different types of disabilities to be found in our pre-service teacher populations--they could form a wellspring of talent that has gone untapped by our schools which so clearly need strong teachers. Our challenge is, "Will we really be ready to include such people in our programs, and will we remember to keep our expectations high?"

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